



Igor Stravinski

(1882 - 1971)

The Rake's Progress

The Rake's Progress (La Carrière du libertin) est un opéra en trois actes composé par Igor Stravinsky entre 1948 et 1951 sur un livret de Wystan Hugh Auden et Chester Kallman, inspiré en partie de la série de huit peintures A Rake's Progress de William Hogarth.

La création a lieu le 11 septembre 1951 à La Fenice de Venise sous la direction du compositeur, avec, à la demande de Stravinsky, Elisabeth Schwarzkopf dans le rôle d'Anne Trulove.

L'opéra est monté en France en version française le 18 juin 1953 à Paris, salle Favart pour son entrée au répertoire de l'Opéra de Paris, adapté et traduit par André de Badet.

Rôles

Trulove,	basse
Anne, sa fille,	soprano
Tom Rakewell, son soupirant, le libertin	ténor
Nick Shadow, Serviteur de Tom, incarnation du Diable	baryton
Mother Goose, tenancière de maison,	mezzo-soprano
Baba la turque, femme à barbe dans un cirque,	mezzo-soprano
Sellem, commissaire-priseur,	ténor
le gardien de l'asile,	basse
Chœurs : Prostituées et mauvais garçons, domestiques, citadins, aliénés	

Argument

L'histoire se déroule dans l'Angleterre du XVIIIe siècle

Acte I

Scène 1 : Le jardin de la maison de Trulove, au printemps.

Le jeune Tom Rakewell, gentilhomme impécunieux, est épris d'Anne Trulove. Le père de la jeune fille, propriétaire foncier, souhaite sincèrement le bonheur du jeune couple, mais il met secrètement en doute la force de caractère de Tom. Il estime ses soupçons fondés lorsque Tom refuse un emploi stable à la Cité.

Tom s'en remet plus volontiers à la fortune, en faisant un vœu "Je voudrais être riche". Un étranger, qui se présente sous le nom de Nick Shadow, arrive alors soudainement en annonçant le décès d'un oncle inconnu de Tom, qui lui aurait légué tous ses biens. Tom doit le suivre pour liquider cette succession. Shadow se propose comme serviteur et guide à travers les vicissitudes de la vie. La question de ses gages sera réglée en temps opportun – un an et un jour plus tard. Tom le rétribuera en fonction de la valeur à laquelle il aura estimé ses services. Tom prend congé d'Anne et de son père. Shadow, se tournant vers le public, clame "The progress of a Rake begin".

Scène 2 : Le bordel de Mother Goose.

Shadow familiarise Tom avec les avantages de sa nouvelle prospérité. Bruyamment soutenu par des prostituées et de jeunes noceurs, Tom répète le catéchisme de son nouveau credo. Affublée du titre de Lady Bishop, Mother Goose préside la cérémonie. Le néophyte donne satisfaction jusqu'à la question de son amour nostalgique pour Anne, et du regret de son bonheur d'antan.

Mother Goose l'incite à boire davantage, et les remords s'évanouissent. Les filles de joie l'aideraient de tout cœur à dissiper son chagrin ; mais Mother Goose, en tant que doyenne du lieu, réclame le jeune homme pour elle seule.

Scène 3 : Le jardin de Trulove en hiver.

Les mois ont passé et Anne est sans nouvelles de Tom. Elle pense qu'il a besoin d'elle et part à sa recherche.

Acte II

Scène 1 : Chez Tom.

Blasé, déçu, Tom cherche désespérément le bonheur. Shadow lui propose d'épouser Baba la Turque, la nouvelle sensation de la foire de St-Gilles ; il soutient que l'on ne peut être heureux qu'en agissant librement, et que, pour être libre, il faut défier la tyrannie du désir et du devoir.

Baba, la femme à barbe, représente l'antithèse du désir ; il ne lui devra rien.

Elle est l'agent tout désigné de son bonheur. Tom se laisse convaincre par Shadow. Il courtise Baba et obtient sa main.

Scène 2 : À Londres.

Anne trouve Tom, qu'elle voit arriver de loin. Elle le salue, mais il la prie de retourner chez elle et de l'oublier. Londres ne convient pas à sa bonté, à sa vertu. Anne proteste de son amour pour Tom et le quitte, écrasée de honte en apprenant que l'impatient attendant Rakewell est Baba la Turque, devenue son épouse.

Tom guide Baba la Turque, voilée, devant les citadins qui se pressent et supplient Baba de se laisser entrevoir. Sur les instances de cette foule, elle se dévoile.

Scène 3 : Chez Tom.

Baba prend son petit déjeuner avec Tom. Elle énumère les cadeaux reçus de ses innombrables admirateurs au cours de ses tournées triomphales à travers l'Europe. Tom l'exaspère par sa lassitude et son indifférence. Baba l'accuse d'être toujours épris d'Anne ; elle écume de rage et de jalousie. Tom étouffe ses plaintes ; puis il retombe dans le sommeil, ultime refuge devant l'ennui.

Sur ces entrefaites, Shadow introduit chez lui une machine truquée, supposée transformer des pierres en pain. Tom se réveille et raconte à Shadow qu'il vient de rêver à ce genre de machine. Loin de se rendre compte que c'est un attrape-nigaud, il voit en elle le moyen d'enrayer la pauvreté et de faire le bonheur des indigents. Par cette bonne action, il espère redevenir digne de l'amour d'Anne. Il se propose de consacrer toute son énergie à collecter des fonds pour cette entreprise.

Acte III

Scène 1 : Chez Tom.

L'escroquerie de Tom a émergé au grand jour, provoquant sa ruine en même temps que celle d'innocents qui ont investi dans son projet. Des citadins alléchés se pressent pour assister à la vente aux enchères de ses biens.

Anne est arrivée, soucieuse d'avoir des nouvelles de Tom ; mais personne ne peut lui dire où il se trouve. Sellem, le commissaire-priseur, donne le coup d'envoi à la vente. Les enchères flambent, et sont portées à leur paroxysme lorsque Sellem offre un objet mystérieux : c'est Baba recouverte de la toile que Tom lui avait mis pour la faire taire. Elle se rue aussitôt à la défense de ses biens, inconsciente du temps écoulé depuis que Tom l'a réduite au silence.

On entend Tom et Nick chanter des quolibets à l'adresse de Baba. Anne revient au son de ces voix. Baba vient la voir et lui confie que Tom l'aime toujours, et que seul son amour peut encore le sauver. Anne se précipite à la recherche de Tom. Baba retourne exercer à la foire.

Scène 2 : Un cimetière.

Un an et un jour se sont écoulés depuis que Shadow est entré au service de Tom ; et le voici qui réclame sa rétribution : l'âme de Tom. Une tombe est ouverte, fraîchement creusée. Shadow commence par offrir à Tom le choix de sa mort : par le poison, le fer, la corde ou le feu. Puis il lui propose de s'en remettre aux cartes pour décider de son sort. Shadow se dispose à tricher. Mais le souvenir d'Anne inspire Tom avec bonheur ; et il gagne le jeu. Furieux de voir que son astuce a été déjouée et que l'âme de Tom lui échappe, Shadow se venge en le frappant de folie.

Scène 3 : Un asile d'aliénés.

Tom est enfermé dans un asile d'aliénés où il se croit Adonis. Anne lui rend visite ; il la prend pour Vénus, qu'il n'a cessé de chercher. Il lui demande pardon pour avoir si longtemps dédaigné son amour. Elle le réconforte et le borde en lui chantant une berceuse.

Son amour n'a pas fléchi. Seulement, elle se rend compte que ce n'est plus elle mais bien Vénus que Tom convoite désormais ; aussi consent-elle tristement à rentrer chez elle avec son père. Tom se réveille et s'aperçoit que Vénus est partie.

Son cœur se brise de désespoir. Les fous se lamentent sur la perte d'Adonis, l'amant de Vénus.

[Prelude]

ACT ONE

Scene 1

Garden of Trulove's house in the country.
Afternoon in spring.

*(House - right, Garden Gate - Center Back,
Arbour - left downstage in which Anne and
Tom are seated.)*

[Duet and Trio]

Anne

The woods are green and bird and beast at
[play]
For all things keep this festival of May;
With fragrant odours and with notes of cheer
The pious earth observes the solemn year.

Tom

Now is the season when the Cyprian Queen
With genial charm translates our mortal
[scene,
When swains their nymphs in fervent arms
[enfold
And with a kiss restore the Age of Gold.

Anne

How sweet within the budding grove
To walk, to love.

Tom

How sweet beside the pliant stream
To lie, to dream.

(Enter Trulove from house and stands aside.)

Trulove

O may a father's prudent fears
Unfounded prove,
And ready vows and loving looks
Be all they seem.
In youth we fancy we are wise,
But time hath shown,
Alas, too often and too late,
We have not known
The hearts of others or our own.

Anne and Tom

Love tells no lies
And in Love's eyes
We see our future state,
Ever happy, ever fair:
Sorrow, hate,
Disdain, despair,
Rule not there.
But love alone
Reigns o'er his own.

[Recitative]

Trulove

(coming forward)
Anne, my dear.

Anne

Yes, Father.

Trulove

Your advice is needed in the kitchen.

(Anne curtsies and exits into house.)

Tom, I have news for you. I have spoken on
your behalf to a good friend in the City and
he offers you a position in his counting house.

Tom

You are too generous, sir. You must not think
me ungrateful if I do not immediately accept
what you propose, but I have other prospects
in view.

Trulove

Your reluctance to seek steady employment
makes me uneasy.

Tom

Be assured your daughter shall not marry a
poor man.

Trulove

So he be honest, she may take a poor hus-
band if she choose, but I am resolved she
shall never marry a lazy one.

(Exits into house.)

Tom

The old fool.

[Recitative and Aria]

Here I stand, my constitution sound, my
frame not illfavoured, my wit ready, my heart
light. I play the industrious apprentice in a
copybook? I submit to the drudge's yoke? I,
slave through a lifetime to enrich others,
and then be thrown away like a gnawed
bone? Not I! Have not grave doctors assu-
red us that good works are of no avail for
Heaven predestines all? In my fashion I
may profess myself of their party and here-
with entrust myself to Fortune.

[Aria]

Since it is not by merit
We rise or we fall,
But the favour of Fortune
That governs us all,

Why should I labour
For what in the end
She will give me for nothing
If she be my friend?
While if she be not, why,
The wealth I might gain
For a time by my toil would
At last be in vain.
Till I die, then of fever
Or by lightning am struck,
Let me live by my wits
And trust to my luck.
My life lies before me,
The world is so wide:
Come, wishes, be horses;
This beggar shall ride.

(Tom walks about.)

I wish I had money.

[Recitative]

(Nick appears immediately at the garden gate.)

Nick
Tom Rakewell?

Tom
(startled, turning around)
I...

Nick
I seek Tom Rakewell with a message. Is this his house?

Tom
No, not his house, but you have found him straying in his thoughts and footsteps. In short...

Nick
You are he?

Tom
(laughing)
Yes, surely. Tom Rakewell at your service.

Nick
Well, well.
(bows)
Nick Shadow, sir, and at your service. For, surely as you bear your name, I bear you a bright future. You recall an uncle, sir?

Tom
An uncle? My parents never mentioned one.

Nick
They quarrelled, I believe, sir. Yet he... Sir, have you friends?

Tom
More than a friend. The daughter of this house and ruler of my heart.

Nick
A lover's fancy and a lovely thought. Then call her, call her. Indeed, let all who will, make their joy here of your glad tidings.

(Tom rushes into the house and Nick reaches over the garden gate, unlatches it, enters the garden and walks forward. Tom re-enters from the house with Anne and Trulove.)

Nick
(bows)
Fair lady, gracious gentlemen, a servant begs your pardon for your time, but there is much to tell. Tom Rakewell had an uncle, one long parted from his native land. Him I served many years, served him in the many trades he served in turn; and all to his profit. Yes, profit was perpetually his. It was indeed, his family, his friend, his hour of amusement, his life. But all his brilliant progeny of gold could not caress him when he lay dying. Sick for his home, sick for a memory of pleasure or of love, his thoughts were but of England. There at least, he felt, his profit could be pleasure to an eager youth; for such, by counting years upon his fumbling fingers, he knew that you must be, good sir. Well, he is dead. And I am here with this commission: to tell Tom Rakewell that an unloved and forgotten uncle loved and remembered. You are a rich man.

[Quartet]

Tom
I wished but once, I knew
That surely my wish would come true,
That I
Had but to speak at last
And Fate would smile when Fortune cast
The die.
I knew.
(to Nick)
Yet you, who bring
The fateful end of questioning,
Here by
A new and grateful master's side,
Be thanked, and as my Fortune and my guide,
Remain, confirm, deny.

Nick

Be thanked, for masterless should I abide
Too long, I soon would die.

Anne

Be thanked, O God, for him, and may a bride

Soon to his vows reply. Be thanked.

Trulove

Be thanked, O God, and curb in him all pride,

That Anne may never sigh.
Be thanked.

(Tom puts one arm around Anne and gestures outward with the other.)

Tom

My Anne, behold, for doubt has fled our
The skies are clear and every path is true. [view,

Anne

The joyous fount I see that brings increase
To fields of promise and the groves of peace.

Anne and Tom

O clement love!

Trulove

My children, may God bless you
Even as a father.

Nick

Sir, may Nick address you
A moment in your bliss? Even in carefree
[May

A thriving fortune has its roots of care:
Attorneys crouched like gardeners to pay,
Bowers of paper only seals repair;

We must be off to London.

Tom

They can wait!

Trulove

No, Tom, your man is right, things must be
The sooner that you settle your estate, [done.
The sooner you and Anne can be as one.

Anne

Father is right, dear Tom.

Nick

A coach in wait
Is down the road.

Tom

Well then, if Fortune sow
A crop that wax and pen must cultivate,

Let's fly, to husbandry and make it grow.

[Recitative]

Nick

I'll call the coachman, sir.

Trulove

Should you not mind, I'll tell you of his needs.

Nick

Sir, you are kind.

(Trulove and Nick exit by garden gate.)

[Duetтино]

Anne

Farewell for now, may heart
Is with you when you go,
However you may fare.

Tom

Wherever, when apart,
I may be, I shall know
That you are with me there.

Anne

Farewell, farewell.

(Trulove and Nick re-enter by garden gate.)

[Recitative]

Nick

All is ready, sir.

Tom

Tell me, good Shadow, since born and bred
in indigence, I am unacquainted with such
matters, what wages you are accustomed to
receive.

Nick

Let us not speak of that, master, till you
know better what my services are worth. A
year and a day hence, we will settle our ac-
count, and then, I promise you, you shall
pay me no more and no less than what you
your-self acknowledge to be just.

Tom

A fair offer. 'Tis agreed.

[Arioso and Terzettino]

Dear Father Trulove, the very moment my
affairs are settled, I shall send for you and

my dearest Anne. And when she arrives, all London shall be at her feet, for all London shall be mine, and what is mine must of needs at least adore what I must with all my being worship.

(Tom and Trulove shake hands affectionately. – Anne brings her hand quickly to her eyes and turns her head away. – Tom steps forward.)

Tom

(aside)

Laughter and light, and all charms that
[endear,

All that dazzles or dins,
Wisdom and wit shall adorn the career
Of him who can play, and who wins.

Anne

(aside)

Heart, you are happy, yet why should a tear

Dim our joyous designs?

Trulove

(aside)

Fortune so swift and so easy, I fear
May only encourage his sins.
Be well, be well advised.

Anne

Be always near.

(Anne, Tom and Trulove move toward the garden gate, Nick holds it open for them and they pass through.)

Anne and Trulove

Farewell, farewell.

Nick

(turning to audience)

The PROGRESS OF A RAKE begins.

Scene 2

Mother Goose's brothel, London.

(At a table, downstage right, sit Tom, Nick and Mother Goose drinking. Backstage left a Cuckoo Clock. – Whores, Roaring Boys.)

[Chorus]

Roaring Boys

With air commanding and weapon handy
We rove in a band through the streets at
[night,

Our only notion to make commotion
And find occasion to provoke a fight.

Whores

In triumph glorious with trophies curious
We return victorious from Love's campaigns;
No troops more practised in Cupid's tactics

By feint and ambush the day to gain.

Roaring Boys

For what is sweeter to human nature
Than to quarrel over nothing at all,
To hear the crashing of furniture smashing
Or heads being bashed in a tavern brawl.

Whores

With darting glances and bold advances
We open fire upon young and old;
Surprised by rapture, their hearts are
[captured,
And into our laps they pour their gold.

Tutti

A toast to our commanders then
From their Irregulars;
A toast, ladies and gentlemen:
To VENUS and to MARS!

[Recitative and Scene]

Nick

Come, Tom, I would fain have our hostess, good
Mother Goose, learn how faithfully I have
discharged my duties as a godfather in prepar-
ing you for the delights to which your new-
ly-found state of manhood is about to call you.
So tell my lady Bishop of the game
What I did vow and promise in thy name.

Tom

One aim in all things to pursue:
My duty to myself to do.

Nick

(to Mother Goose)
Is he not apt?

Mother Goose

And handsome too.

Nick

What is thy duty to thyself?

Tom

To shut my ears to prude and preacher

And follow Nature as my teacher.

Mother Goose

What is the secret Nature knows?

Tom

What Beauty is and where it grows.

Nick
Canst thou define the Beautiful?

Tom
I can.
That source of pleasure to the eyes
Youth owns, wit snatches, money buys,

Envy affects to scorn, but lies:
One fatal flaw it has. It dies.

Nick
Exact, my scholar!

Mother Goose
What is Pleasure then?

Tom
The idol of all dreams, the same
Whatever shape it wear or name;
Whom flirts imagine as a hat,
Old maids believe to be a cat.

Mother Goose
Bravo.

Nick
One final question. Love is...

Tom
(aside)
Love,
That precious word is like a fiery coal,

It burns my lips, strikes terror to my soul.

Nick
No answer? Will my scholar fail me?

Tom
(violently)
No, no more.

Nick
Well, well.

Mother Goose
More wine, love?

Tom
Let me go.

Nick
Are you afraid?

(As the Cuckoo Clock coos ONE, Tom rises.)

Tom
Before it is too late.

Nick
Wait.

(Nick makes a sign and the clock turns backward and coos TWELVE.)

See. Time is yours. The hours obey your pleasure. Fear not. Enjoy. You may repent at leisure.

[Chorus]

(Tom sits down again and drink wildly.)

Roaring Boys and Whores
Soon dawn will glitter outside the shutter
And small birds twitter. But what of that?

So long as we're able and wine's on the table,

Who cares what the troubling day is at?

While food has flavour and limbs are shapely

And hearts beat bravely to fiddle or drum

Our proper employment is reckless
[enjoyment.
For too soon the noiseless night will come.

Nick
(rising to address the company:)
Sisters of Venus,

[Recitative]

Brothers of Mars, Fellow-worshippers in the Temple of Delight, it is my privilege to present to you a stranger to our rites who, following our custom, begs leave to sing you a song in earnest of his desire to be initiated. As you see, he is young; as you shall discover, he is rich. My master, and, if he will pardon the liberty, my friend, Mister Tom Rakewell.

[Cavatina]

Tom
(coming forward to sing)
Love, too frequently betrayed
For some plausible desire
Or the world's enchanted fire,
Still thy traitor in his sleep
Renews the vow he did not keep,
Weeping, weeping,
He kneels before thy wounded shade.
Love, my sorrow and my shame,
Though thou daily be forgot,
Goddess, O forget me not.
Lest I perish, O be nigh
In my darkest hour that I,
Dying, dying,
May call upon thy sacred name.

[Chorus]

Whores

How sad a song. –
But sadness charms. –
How handsomely he cries. –
Come, drown your sorrows in these arms. –
Forget it in these eyes. –
Upon these lips.

Mother Goose

(pushing them aside and taking Tom's hand)

Away! Tonight
I exercise my elder right
And claim him for my prize.

[Chorus]

(The Chorus forms a lane with the men on one side and the women on the other, as in a children's game. Mother Goose and Tom walk slowly between them to a door back-stage. – Nick stands down stage watching.)

Chorus

The sun is bright, the grass is green.
Lanternloo, lanternloo.
The King is courting his young Queen.
Lanternloo, my Lady. –
They go a-walking. What do they see? –
An almanack in a walnut tree. –
They go a-riding. Whom do they meet? –
Three scarecrows and a pair of feet. –
What will she do when they sit at a table? –
Eat as much as she is able. –
What will he do when they lie in bed? –
Lanternloo, lanternloo! –
Draw his sword and chop off her head. –
Lanternloo, my Lady.

Nick

(raising his glass)
Sweet dreams, my master.

Chorus

Lanternloo, lanternloo!

Nick

Dreams may lie. But dream. For when you
wake, you die.

Scene 3

Same as Scene 1.

(Anne enters from house in traveling clothes.)

[Recitative and Aria]

Anne

No word from Tom.
Has Love no voice, can Love not keep

A Maytime vow in cities? Fades it as the
[rose
Cut for a rich display? Forgot! But no, to
[weep
Is not enough. He needs my help.
Love hears, love knows,
Love answers him across the silent miles, and
[goes.

[Aria]

Quietly, night, O find him and caress,

And may thou quiet find
His heart, although it be unkind,
Nor may its beat confess,

Although I weep, it knows of loneliness.
Guide me, O moon, chastely when I depart,

And warmly be the same
He watches without grief or shame;
It cannot be thou art
A colder moon upon a colder heart.

(Trulove's voice is heard calling from the house: «Anne, Anne».)

[Recitative]

My Father! Can I desert him and his devotion
for a love who has deserted me?

(Starts walking back to the house. Then she stops suddenly.)

No, my father has strength of purpose, while
Tom is weak, and needs the comfort of a
helping hand.

(She kneels.)

O God, protect dear Tom, support my father,
and strengthen my resolve.

(She bows her head, then rises and comes forward with great decision.)

[Cabaletta]

I go to him.
Love cannot falter,
Cannot desert;
Though it be shunned,
Or be forgotten,
Though it be hurt
If love be love
It will not alter.
Though it be shunned
Or be forgotten,

Though it be hurt,
If love be love
It will not alter.
O should I see
My love in need,
It shall not matter
What he may be.
I go to him.
Love cannot falter,
Cannot desert
A loving heart,
An ever-loving heart.

(She turns and starts toward the garden gate.)

ACT TWO

Scene 1

The morning room of Tom's house in a London square. A bright morning sun pours in through the window, also noises from the Street.

(Tom is seated at the breakfast table. At a particularly loud outburst of noise he rises, walks quickly to the window and slams it shut.)

[Aria]

Tom

Vary the song, O London, change!
Disband your notes and let them range,
Let rumour scream, let folly purr,

Let Tone desert the flatterer.

Let Harmony no more obey
The strident choristers of prey.
Yet all your music cannot fill
The gap that in my heart is still.

[Recitative]

O Nature, green unnatural mother, how I have followed where you led. Is it for this I left the country? No ploughman is more a slave to sun, moon and season than a gentleman to the clock of Fashion. City! City! What Caesar could have imagined the curious viands I have tasted? They choke me. And let Oporto and Provence keep all their precious wines. I would as soon be dry and wrinkled as a raisin as ever taste another. Cards! Living pictures! And, dear God, the matrons with their marriageable girls! Cover their charms a little, you well-bred bawds, or your goods will catch their death of the rheum long before they learn of the green sickness. The others too, with their more candid charms. Pah!
Who's honest, chaste, or kind? One, only one, and of her I dare not think.

(He rises.)

Up, Nature, up, the hunt is on; thy pack is in full cry. They smell the blood upon the bracing air. On, on, on, through every street and mansion, for every candle in this capital of light attends thy appetizing progress and burns in honour at thy shrine.

[Aria (reprise)]

Always the quarry that I stalk
Fades or evades me, and I walk
An endless hall of chandeliers
In light that blinds, in light that sears,
Reflected from a million smiles
All empty as the country miles
Of silly wood and senseless park;
And only in my heart the dark.

(He sits down.)

I wish I were happy.

[Recitative]

(Enter Nick. He has a broadsheet in his hand.)

Nick
Master, are you alone?

Tom
And sick at heart. What is it?

Nick
(handing Tom the broadsheet)
Do you know this lady?

Tom
Baba the Turk! I have not visited Saint Giles
Fair as yet. They say that brave warriors who
never flinched at the sound of musketry
have swooned after a mere glimpse of her. Is
such a thing possible in Nature?

Nick
Two noted physicians have sworn that she is
no imposter. Would you go see her?

Tom
Nick, I know that manner of yours. You have
some scheme afoot. Come, sir, out with it.

Nick
Consider her picture.

Tom
Would you see me turned to stone?

Nick
Do you desire her?

Tom
Like the gout or the falling sickness.

Nick
Are you obliged to her?

Tom
Heaven forbid.

Nick
Then marry her.

Tom
Have you taken leave of your senses?

Nick
I was never saner. Come, master, observe
the host of mankind. How are they? Wret-
ched. Why? Because they are not free. Why?
Because the giddy multitude are driven by
the unpredictable Must of their pleasures
and the sober few are bound by the inflexi-
ble Ought of their duty, between which
slaveries there is nothing to choose. Would
you be happy? Then learn to act freely.
Would you act freely? Then learn to ignore
those twin tyrants of appetite and conscien-
ce. Therefore I counsel you, Master – Take
Baba the Turk to wife. Consider her picture
once more and as you do so reflect upon my
words.

[Aria]

In youth the panting slave pursues
The fair evasive dame;
Then, caught in colder fetters, woos
Wealth, Office or a name;
Till, old, dishonoured, sick, downcast
And failing in his wits,
In Virtue's narrow cell at last
The withered bondsman sits.
That man alone his fate fulfills,

For he alone is free
Who chooses what to will, and wills
His choice as destiny.
No eye his future can foretell.
No law his past explain
Whom neither Passion may compel,
Nor Reason can restrain.
Well?

*(Tom looks up from the broadsheet. He and
Nick look at each other. – Then suddenly Tom
begins to laugh. His laughter grows louder
and louder. Nick joins in. They shake hands.
During the Finale Nick helps Tom get dressed
to go out.)*

[Duet - Finale]

Tom
My tale shall be told,
Both by young and by old.
A favorite narration
Throughout the nation

[Duet]

(Anne hurries to him, and he takes a few steps forward to meet her and holds her gently away from himself.)

Tom
(confused and agitated)
Anne! here!

Anne
(with self-control)
And, Tom, such splendour!

Tom
Leave pretences, Anne, ask me, accuse me –

Anne
Tom, no –

Tom
Denounce me to the world, and go.

Anne
Tom, no –

Tom
Return to your home, forget in your senses
What, senseless, you pursue.

Anne
(quietly)
Do you return?

Tom
(violently)
I!

Anne
Then how shall I go?

Tom
You must!
(aside)
O willful powers, pummel to dust
And drive into the void,
one thought – return!

Anne
(aside)
Assist me, Heaven, since love I must
To calm his raging heart, his eyes that burn.

Tom
(turning to Anne and addressing her with a more measured tone)
Listen to me, for I know London well!
Here Virtue is a day coquette,
For what night hides, it can forget,

And Virtue is till gallants talk – and tell.

O Anne, that is the air we breathe; go home,
’Tis wisdom here to be afraid.

Anne
How should I fear, who have your aid
And all my love for you beside, dear Tom?

Tom
(bitterly)
My aid? London has done all that it can
With me. Unworthy am I, less
Than weak. Go back.

Anne
(simply)
Let worthiness,
So you still love, reside in that.

Tom
(touched, stepping toward her with emotion)
O Anne!

(Baba the Turk suddenly puts her head out through the curtains of the sedan chair window. She is very elaborately coiffed, and her face is, below the eyes, heavily veiled in the Eastern fashion.)

[Recitative]

Baba
(interrupting with vexation)
My love, am I to remain in here for ever?
You know that I am not in the habit of stepping from my sedan unaided. Nor shall I wait, unmoved, much longer. Finish, if you please, whatever business is detaining you with this person.

(She withdraws her head.)

Anne
(surprised)
Tom, what?

Tom
My wife, Anne.

Anne
Your wife!
(with slight bitterness)
I see, then, it is I who was unworthy.

(She turns away. Tom again steps towards her, then checks himself.)

[Trio]

Anne

(aside)

Could it then have been known
When spring was love, and love took all our
[ken,

That I and I alone
Upon that forsworn ground,
Should see love dead?
O promise the hear to winter, swear it bound

To nothing live, and you shall wed;
But should you vow to love, O then
See that you shall not feel again,
O never, never, never.
Lest you, alone, your promise keep,

Walk the long aisle, and walking weep

Forever.

Tom

(aside)

It is done, it is done.
I turn away, yet should I turn again,
The arbour would be gone
And on the frozen ground
The birds lie dead.
O bury the heart there deeper than it sound,

Upon its only bridal bed;
And should it, dreaming love, ask: when

Shall I awaken once again?
Say never, never, never.
We shall this wint'ry promise keep,

Obeys the exile, honour sleep
Forever.

Baba

(poking her head out of the curtains at each remark)

Why this delay? Away...

(She sees Anne.)

Oh! Who is it, pray,
He prefers to his Baba on their wedding day?

A family friend? An ancient flame?
I'm quite perplexed
And more, I confess, than a little vexed.
Enough is enough!
Baba is not used
To be so abused.
She is not amused.
Come here, my love.
I hate waiting,

I'm suffocating,
Heavens above!
Will you permit me to sit in this conveyance
for ever and ever?

(Anne exits hurriedly.)

[Finale]

Baba

(from the carriage)

I have not run away, dear heart.
Baba is still waiting patiently for her gallant.

Tom

(squaring his shoulders and helping her from the chair with a gallant bow)

I am with you, dear wife.

Baba

(patting him affectionately on the cheek)

Who was that girl, my life?

Tom

(ironically)

Only a milkmaid, pet,
To whom I was in debt.

(As Tom takes his wife's hand and lifts it to begin conducting her up the steps, the entrance doors are thrown open, servants carry off the sedan chair, servants appear from the entrance and line the sides of steps carrying torches. – Voices are heard off crying.)

Voices

Baba the Turk is here! – Baba the Turk is here!

(Baba, as she begins her ascent, draws herself up with obvious pride and the town people pour on to the stage.)

Crowd

Baba the Turk, Baba the Turk, before you
[retire,
Show thyself once, O grant us our desire.

(Baba and Tom have reached the top of the steps. He exits into the house. – Baba, with an eloquent gesture, sweeps around to face the town people, removes her veil and reveals a full and flowing black beard.)

Chorus

(entranced)

Ah! Baba, Baba, Baba. Ah!

(Baba blows them a kiss and keeps her arms outstretched with the practiced manner of a great artiste.)

Scene 3

The same room as Act Two, Scene I, except that now it cluttered up with every conceivable kind of object: stuffed animals and birds, cases of minerals, china, glass, etc.

(Tom and Baba are sitting at breakfast, the former sulking, the latter breathlessly chattering.)

[Aria]

Baba

As I was saying both brothers wore
[moustaches,
But Sir John was taller, they gave me the
[musical glasses.
That was in Vienna, no, it must have been
[Milan
Because of the donkeys. Vienna was the
[Chinese fan –
Or was it the bottle of water from the River
[Jordan?
I'm certain at least it was Vienna and Lord
[Gordon.
I get confused about all my travels.

The snuff boxes came from Paris, and the
[fluminous gravels
From a cardinal who admired me vastly in
[Rome.
You're not eating, my love. Count Moldau
[gave me the gnome,
And Prince Obolowsky the little statues of
[the Twelve Apostles,
Which I like best of all my treasures except
[my fossils.
Which reminds me I must tell Bridget never
[to touch the mummies.
I'll dust them myself. She can do the
[waxwork dummies.
Of course I like my birds, too, especially my
[Great Auk;
But the moths will get in them.
My love, what's the matter, why don't you
talk? What's the matter?

Tom

Nothing.

Baba

Speak to me!

Tom

Why?

(Baba rises and puts her arms lovingly around Tom's neck.)

[Baba's Song]

Baba

Come, sweet, come,
Why so glum?
Smile at Baba who
Loving smiles at you.
Do not frown,
Husband dear...

Tom

(pushing her violently away)
Sit down.

(Baba bursts into tears and rage. During her aria she strides about the stage. – At each of the four words Baba picks up some object and smashes it.)

[Aria]

Baba

Scorned! Abused! Neglected! Baited!
Wretched me!
Why is this? I can see.
I know who is
Your bliss, your love, your life,
While I, your loving wife –
Lie not! am hated.
Young, demure, delightful, clever,
Is she not?
(showing her face into Tom's)
Not as I. That is what I know you sigh.

Then sigh! Then cry! For she
Your wife shall never be –
Oh no! no, ne[ver]...

(Tom rises suddenly, seizes the wig and plumps it down over her head, back to front, cutting her run off. – Baba remains silent and motionless in her place for the rest of the scene. Tom walks moodily about with his hands in his pockets, then flings himself down in a sofa backstage.)

[Recitative]

Tom

My heart is cold, I cannot weep;
One remedy is left me: sleep.

(He sleeps.)

[Pantomime]

(A door right opens and Nick peeps in. Seeing all clear, he withdraws his head and then enters, wheeling in front of him some large object covered by a dust sheet. When he has brought it to the front centre of the stage he removes dust sheet; discloses a fantastic baroque machine. He looks about, picks a

loaf of bread from the table, opens a door in the front of the machine, puts in the loaf and closes the door. Then he looks round again and picks off the floor a piece of a broken vase. This he drops into a hopper on the machine. He turns a wheel and the loaf of bread falls out of a chute. He opens the door, takes out the piece of china, replaces it by the loaf and repeats the performance, so that the audience sees that the mechanism is the crudest kind of false bottom. The second time he ends with the loaf in the machine and the piece of china in his hand. Then he puts back the dust sheet and wheels the machine back-stage near Tom's sofa and takes up a position near Tom's head.)

Nick
(singing to himself)
Fa la la la...

[Recitative - Arioso - Recitative]

Tom
(stirring in his sleep)
O I wish it were true.

Nick
Awake?

Tom
(starting up)
Who's there?

Nick
Your shadow, master.

Tom
You!

O Nick, I've had the strangest dream. I
[thought –
How could I know what I was never taught

Or fancy objects I have never seen? –
I had devised a marvellous machine,
An engine that converted stones to bread
Whereby all peoples were for nothing fed.

I saw all want abolished by my skill
And earth become an Eden of good-will.

Nick
(with a conjurer's gesture, whipping the dust sheet off the machine)
Did your machine look anything like this?

Tom
I must be still asleep. That is my dream.

Nick
How does it work?

Tom
(very excited)
I need a stone.

Nick
(handing him the piece of china)
Try this.

Tom
I place it here. I turn the wheel and then –
(The loaf falls out.)

The bread!

Nick
Be certain. Taste!

Tom
(after tasting it, falls on his knees)
O miracle!
O may I not, forgiven all my past,
For one good deed deserve dear Anne at
[last?

[Duet]

(beside his machine, très exalté and oblivious to his surroundings)

Thanks to this excellent device
Man shall re-enter Paradise
From which he once was driven.
Secure from need, the cause of crime,
The world shall for the second time
Be similar to Heaven.

Nick
(downstage – in a worldly-wise manner and taking the audience into his confidence)
A word to all my friends, where'er you sit,

The men of sense in boxes or the pit.

My master is a fool as you can see,
But you may do good business with me.

Tom
When to his infinite relief
Toil, hunger, poverty and grief
Have vanished like a dream,
This engine Adam shall excite
To hallelujahs of delight
And ecstasy extreme.

Nick
The idle drone and the deserving poor
Will give good money for this toy, be sure. –

For, so it please, there's no fantastic lie
You cannot make men swallow if you try.

Tom

Omnipotent
 When armed with this,
 In secular abundant bliss
 He shall ascend the Chain
 Of Being to its top to win
 The throne of Nature and begin
 His everlasting reign.

Nick

So, you who know your proper interest,
 Here is your golden chance. Invest. Invest.
 Come, take your chance immediately.
 [my friends,
 And praise the folly that pays dividends.

[Recitative]

Forgive me, master, for intruding upon your transports; but your dream is still a long way from fulfillment. Here is the machine, it is true. But it must be manufactured in great quantities. It must be advertised, it must be sold. We shall need money and advice. We shall need partners, merchants of probity and reputation in the City.

Tom

Alas, good Shadow, your admonitions are only too just; and they chill my spirit. For who am I, who am become a by-word for extravagance and folly, to approach such men? Is this dream, too, this noble vision, to prove as empty as the rest? What shall I do?

Nick

Have no fear, master. Leave such matters to me. Indeed, I have already spoken with several notable citizens concerning your invention; and they are as eager to see it as you to show.

Tom

Ingenious Shadow! How could I live without you? I cannot wait. Let's visit them immediately.

(Tom and Nick begin wheeling the machine out. – Just as they reach the door, Nick, who is pulling in front, turns.)

Nick

Should you not tell the good news to your wife?

Tom

Wy wife? I have no wife. I've buried her.

(Exeunt.)

ACT THREE**Scene 1**

The same as Act Two, Scene 3, except that everything is covered with cobwebs and dust. Afternoon. Spring.

(Baba is still seated motionless at the table, the wig over her head.)

Crowd

(from behind the curtain)
 Ruin, Disaster, Shame.

(When the curtain rises a group of the Crowd of Respectable Citizens are examining the objects, two other groups enter as the scene progresses.)

What curious phenomena are up today
 [for sale. –

What manner of remarkables. –
 What squalor, what detail! –
 I am so glad I did not miss the auction. –
 So am I. – I can't begin admiring. –

O fantastic! – Let us buy!
(from off stage)
 Ruin, Disaster, Shame.

(The Crowd pauses in its examination, looks at each other, then comes forward and addresses the audience with hushed voices that barely conceal a tinge of complacency.)

Blasted! Blasted! so many hopes of gain:

Hundreds of sober merchants are insane;
 Widows have sold their mourning clothes to
 [eat;
 Herds of pale orphans, forage in the street;

Many a Duchess divested of gems,
 Has crossed the dread Styx by way of the
 [Thames.
 O stricken, take heart in placing the blame –

Rakewell, Rakewell. Ruin. Disaster. Shame.

(They begin to disperse again into groups examining the objects. – Enter Anne. She looks about quickly and then approaches the Crowd group by group.)

Anne

Do you know where Tom Rakewell is?

Chorus

America. He fled. – Spontaneous combustion caught him hurrying. He's dead.

Anne

Do you know what's become of him?

Chorus

Tom Rakewell? How should we? –
He's Methodist. – He's Papist. –
He's converting Jewery.

Anne

Can no one tell me where he is?

Chorus

We're certain he's in debt;
They're after him, they're after him
And they will catch him yet.

Anne

(aside)

I'll search him in the house myself.

(Exit.)

Chorus

I wonder at her quest. –
She's probably some silly girl he ruined like
[the rest.]

(They return to their examination unconcerned. Then the door is flung open and Sellem enters with a great flurry followed by a few servants who begin clearing space and setting up a dais.)

Sellem

Aha!

Crowd

He's here! The Auctioneer.

Sellem

(to the servants)

No, over there.

(They begin nervously setting it up again in another spot.)

Be quick. Take care.

Crowd

(to each other)

Your bids prepare.

Be quick. Take care.

(Sellem mounts the dais and bows.)

[Recitative]**Sellem**

Ladies both fair and gracious: gentlemen: be all welcome to this miracle of, this most widely heralded of, this, I am sure follow me, ne plus ultra of auctions. – Truly there is a divine balance in Nature: a thousand lose that a thousand may gain; and you who are the fortunate are not so only in yourselves, but also in being Nature's missionaries. You are her instruments for the restoration of that order we all so worship, and it is granted to, ah! so few of us to serve.

(He bows again. – Applause.)

Let us proceed at once. Lots one and two: which cover all objects subsumed under the categories: animal, vegetable and mineral.

[Aria]

(During the following, Sellem is continually on the move, indulging in elaborate byplay, holding up objects; servants are rushing on and off the dais with objects; the Crowd is eager and attentive.)

Who hears me, knows me; knows me
A man with value; look at this –
(holding up the stuffed auk)
What is it? – Wit
And Profit: no one, no one
Could fail to conquer, fail to charm,

Who had it by
To watch. And who could not be
A nimble planner, having this,
(holding up a mounted fish)
Before him? Bid
To get them, get them, hurry!

(During the next bars various individuals and groups in the crowd are bidding excitedly: «one, two, three, five, etc.»)

La! come bid.
Hmm! some buy.
Aha! the auk.
Witty, lovely, wealthy. Poof! go high!

La! some more.
Hmm! come on.
Aha! the pike.

[Bidding Scene]

Seven – eleven – fourteen – nineteen – twenty – twenty-three – going at twenty-three going, going, gone.

Crowd
Hurrah!

[Sellem's Aria (continuing)]

Sellem
(holding up a marble bust)
Behold it, Roman, moral,
The man who has it, has it
Forever, yes!
(holding up a palm branch)
And holy, holy, curing
The body, soul and spirit;
A gift of God's!
(holding up various objects)
And not to mention this or
The other, more and more, and –
So help me – more!
Then bid, O get them, hurry!

(The Crowd bids as before.)

La! come bid.
Hmm! come buy.
Aha! the bust.
Feel them, life eternal: Poof! go high!
La! some more.
Hmm! come on.
Aha! the palm*.

[Bidding Scene]

Fifteen – and a half – three-quarters – sixteen – seventeen – going at seventeen, going, going, gone.

Crowd
Hurrah!

[Recitative]

Sellem
Wonderful. Yes, yes.
And now for the truly adventurous –
(walking over slowly to the covered Baba, and changing his voice to a suggestive whisper)

[Aria (continued)]

An unknown object draws us, draws us near.

A cake? An organ? Golden Apple Tree?

A block of copal? Mint of Alchemy?
Oracle? Pillar? Octopus? Who'll see?
Be brave! – Perhaps an angel will appear.

(The Crowd bids as before, but this time gets so excited that they almost drown out Sellem, and they begin fighting among themselves.)

La! come bid.
Hmm! come buy.
Aha! the it.
This may be salvation. Poof! go high!

La! be calm.
Hmm! come on.
Aha! the what.

[Final Bidding Scene]

(The crowd is so raucous that Sellem is practically shouting by the time he ends his phrase. – In order to quiet the Crowd, Sellem, as he shouts his last «Gone», snatches the wig off Baba's head. The effect quiets them immediately and she, for the moment completely impervious to her surroundings, finishes the word she began in the last scene.)

Fifty – fifty-five – sixty – sixty-one – sixty-two – seventy – ninety – going at ninety – going at a hundred – going, going, gone.

Baba
... ever!

(She looks quickly around, snatches up a veil that is lying on the table, stands up indignantly and during the next verse of her aria brushes herself off.)

[Aria]

Crowd
(in the background)
It's Baba, his wife. It passes believing...

Baba
Sold! Annoyed! I've caught you thieving!
If you dare
Touch a thing,
Then beware
My reckoning;
Be off, be gone, desist:
I, Baba, must insist
Upon – your leaving.

(The voices of Tom and Nick are heard giving a street-cry from off stage.)

Tom and Nick
Old wives for sale, old wives for sale!

Stale wives, prim wives, silly and grim wives!

Old wives for sale!

[Recitative and Duet]

Crowd
Now what was that?

Baba

(aside)

The pigs of plunder!

(Enter Anne hurriedly. She rushes to the window.)

Anne

Was that his voice?

Crowd

What next I wonder?

Baba

(aside)

The milkmaid haunts me.

Anne

(at the window)

Gone.

Baba

(reflectively, after glancing about)

All I possessed seems gone.

(shrugging her shoulders)

Well, well.

(to Anne, a bit imperiously and indulgently)

My dear!

Anne

(turning)

His wife!

Baba

His jest –

No matter now. Come here, my child, to
[Baba.]

(Anne goes over to her.)

Sellem

(obviously under a strain)

Ladies, the sale, if you could go out.

Baba

(impatiently)

Robber,

Don't interrupt.

Crowd

(to Sellem)

Don't interrupt or rail; –

A scene like this is better than a sale.

[Duet]

Baba

(to Anne)

You love him, seek to set him right:

He's but a shuttle-headed lad:

Not quite a gentleman, nor quite

Completely vanquished by the bad.
Who knows what care and love might do?

But good or bad, I know he still loves you.

Anne

He loves me still! Then I alone

In weeping doubt have been untrue.

O hope, endear my love, atone,

Enlighten, grace whatever may ensue.

Sellem and Crowd

He loves her. – Who? – That isn't known.

He loves her still. – The tale is sad – if true.

Baba

But god or bad, I know, he still loves you.

So find him, and his man beware!

I may have made a bad mistake

Yet I can tell who in that pair

Is poisoned victim and who snake.

Then go –

Anne

But where shall you...?

Baba

(lifting her hand to interrupt gently)

My dear,

A gifted lady never need have fear.

I shall go back and grace the stage,

Where manner rules and wealth attends.

(with an all-inclusive gesture)

Can I deny my time its rage?

My self-indulgent intermezzo ends.

Anne

Can I for him all love engage

And yet believe her happy, when love ends?

Crowd

She will go back. – Her view is sage. – That's
life. – We came to buy. – See how it ends.

Sellem

(despondently)

Money farewell... Who'll buy?

The auction ends.

[Ballad Tune]

*(The voices of Tom and Nick are again heard
from the street. – All on stage pause to listen.)*

Tom and Nick

If boys had wings and girls had stings

And gold fell from the sky,
If new-laid eggs wore wooden legs
I should not laugh or cry.

Anne

It's Tom, I know!

Baba

The two, then go!

Sellem and Crowd

The thief below!

[Stretto - Finale]

Anne

I go to him.
O love, be brave,
Be swift, be true,
Be strong for him and save.

Baba

Then go to him.
In love be brave,
Be swift, be true,
Be strong for him and save.

Sellem and Crowd

They're after him.
His crime was grave;
Be swift if you
Want time enough to save.

Anne

(to Baba)
May God bless you.

All

(but Anne)
Be swift if you
Want time enough to save.

(Anne rushes out.)

[Ballad Tune (reprise)]

(The voices of Tom and Nick are heard disappearing in the distance.)

Tom and Nick

Who cares a fig for Tory or Whig?
Not I, not I, not I.

(Baba turns and addresses Sellem with lofty command:)

Baba

You! Summon my carriage!

(Sellem, impressed in spite of himself and certainly forgetting he came to auction off her carriage, bows, goes to the door and opens it for her.)

Baba

(to the Crowd)

Out of my way!

(Crowd falls back and she starts out. – At the door she pauses to remark:)

The next time you see Baba, you shall pay!

(Grand exit of Baba.)

Crowd

(murmurs:)

We've never been through such a hectic day.

Scene 2

A starless night. A Churchyard. Tombs. Front center a newly-dug grave. Behind it a flat raised tomb, against which is leaning a sexton's spade. On the right a yew-tree.)

[Prelude]

[Duet]

(Enter Tom and Nick left, the former out of breath, the latter carrying a little black bag.)

Tom

How dark and dreadful is this place.
Why have you led me here?
There's something, Shadow, in your face
That fills my soul with fear!

Nick

A year and a day have passed away
Since first to you I came.
All things you bid, I duly did

And now my wages claim.

Tom

Shadow, good Shadow, be patient; I
Am beggared as you know
But promise when I am rich again

To pay you all I owe.

Nick

'Tis not your money but your soul
Which I this night require.
Look in my eyes and recognise

Whom, fool! you chose to hire.

(pointing out the grave, and taking the objects mentioned out of his bag)

Behold your waiting grave, behold –
Steel, halter, poison, gun.
Make no excuse, thine exit choose:
Tom Rakewell's race is run.

Tom

O let the wild hills cover me
Or the abounding wave.

Nick

The sins you did may not be hid.

Think not your soul to save.

Tom

O why did an uncle I never knew
Select me for his heir?

Nick

It pleases well the damned in Hell
To bring another there.
Midnight is come; by rope or gun
Or medicine or knife
On the stroke of Twelve you shall slay
[yourself]
For forfeit is your life.

(A clock begins to strike.)

Count one, count two, count three, count four,
Count five and six and seven ...

Tom

Have mercy on me, Heaven.

Nick

... count eight –

Tom

Too late.

Nick

No, wait.

(He holds up his hand and the clock stops after the ninth stroke.)

[Recitative]

Nick

(urbanely)

Very well then, my dear and good Tom, perhaps you impose a bit upon our friendship; but Nick, as you know, is a gentleman at heart, forgives your dilatoriness and suggests – a game.

Tom

A game?

Nick

A game of chance to finally decide your fate.

Have you a pack of cards?

Tom

(taking a pack from his pocket)

All that remains me of this world, and for the next.

Nick

You jest. Fine, fine. Good spirits make a game go well. I shall explain. The rules are simple and the result simpler still: Nick will cut three cards. If you can name them, you are free; if not

(He points to the instruments of death.)

you choose the path to follow me.
You understand?

(Tom nods.)

Let us begin.

(Nick shuffles the cards, places the pack in the palm of his left hand and cuts with his right, holding then the portion with the exposed card towards the audience and away from Tom.)

[Duet]

Well, then.

Tom

My heart is wild with fear, my throat is dry,

Nick

Come, try.

Tom

I cannot think, I dare not wish.

Nick

Let wish be thought and think on one to
[name,
You wish in all your fear could rule the game

Instead of Shadow.

Tom

(aside)

Anne!

(calmly)

My fear departs;

I name the Queen of Hearts.

Nick

(holding up the card towards Tom)

The Queen of Hearts.

(He tosses it to one side. – The clock strikes once.)

You see, it's quite a simple game.

(As Tom lifts his head in silent thanks, Nick addresses the audience.)

To win at once in love or cards is dull;
The gentleman loves sport, for sport is rare;

The positive appalls him;
He plays the pence of hope to yield the
guineas of despair.
(turning back to Tom)
Again, good Tom. You are my master yet.

(Nick repeats the routine of shuffling and cutting the cards.)

Tom

What shall I trust in now? How throw the
[die ...

Nick

Come, try.

Tom

... To win my soul back for myself?

Nick

Was Fortune not your mistress once? Be fair.

Give her at least the second chance to bare

The hand of Shadow.

(The spade falls forward with a great crash.)

Tom

(startled, cursing)

The deuce!

(He looks at what fell.)

Tom

(calmly)

She lights the shades
And shows the two of spades.

Nick

(with scarcely contained anger throwing the card aside)

The two of spades.

(The clock strikes once.)

Congratulations. The Goddess still is faithful.
(changing his tone)

But we have one more, you know, the very last. Think for a while, my Tom, where you have come to. I would not want your last of chances thoughtless. I am, you may have often-times observed, really compassionate. Think on your hopes.

Tom

Oh God, what hopes have I?

(He covers his face in his arm and leans against the tomb. Nick reaches deftly down, picks up one of the discarded cards and holds it up while he addresses the audience.)

Nick

The simpler the trick, the simpler the deceit;
That there is no return, I've taught him well,

And repetition palls him:
The Queen of Hearts again shall be for him
[the Queen of Hell.

(He slips the card into the pack and then turns to Tom.)

Rouse yourself, Tom, your travail soon will
[end.

(Routine with cards.)

Come, try.

Tom

Now in his words I find no aid.
Will Fortune give another sign?

Nick

(aside)

Now in my words, he'll find no aid
And Fortune gives no other sign.

(Tom looks nervously about him.)

Afraid Love-lucky Tom? Come, try!

Tom

(frightened, looking away from the ground)
Dear God, a track of cloven hooves!

Nick

(sardonic)

The knavish goats are back
To crop the spring's return.

Tom

(stepping forward, agonized)
Return! and Love!

[The banished words torment.

Nick

You cannot now repent.

Tom

Return, return!

O Love!

Anne

(off stage)

A love

That is sworn before thee can plunder Hell
Of its prey.

(Tom breaks off, when he realizes he is singing with Anne. – Nick stands as though frozen.)

Tom

I wish for nothing else.

(exalté)

Love, first and last, assume eternal reign;
Renew my life, o Queen of Hearts, again.

(As he sings «O Queen of Hearts, again», he snatches the exposed half pack from the still motionless Nick. – The twelfth stroke strikes. With a cry of joy Tom sinks to the ground senseless.)

Nick

I burn! I freeze! In shame I hear
My famished legions roar:
My own delay lost me my prey
And damns myself the more.
Defeated, mocked, again I sink
In ice and flame to lie.
But Heaven's will I'll hate and till
Eternity defy.

(looking at Tom)

Your sins, my foe, before I go

Give me some power to pain:

(with a magic gesture)

To reason blind shall be your mind;
Henceforth be you insane!

(Slowly Nick sinks into the grave. – Blackout. – The dawn comes up. It is spring. The open grave is now covered with a green mound upon which Tom sits smiling, putting grass on his head and singing to himself in a child-like voice.)

Tom

With roses crowned, I sit on ground;
Adonis is my name.
The only dear of Venus fair:
Methinks it is no shame.

Scene 3

Bedlam. – Backstage centre on a raised eminence a straw pallet.

(Tom stands before it facing the Chorus of Madmen who include a blind man with a broken fiddle, a crippled soldier, a man with a telescope and three old hags.)

[Arioso]

Tom

Prepare yourselves, heroic shades. Wash you and make you clean. Anoint your limbs with oil, put on your wedding garments and crown your heads with flowers. Let music strike. Venus, queen of Love, will visit her un-worthy Adonis.

[Dialogue]

Chorus

Madmen's words are all untrue;
She will never come to you.

Tom

She gave me her promise.

Chorus

Madness cancels every vow;
She will never keep it now.

Tom

Come quickly, Venus, or I die.

(He sits down on the pallet and buries his face in his hands. The Chorus dances before him with mocking gestures.)

Chorus

Leave all love and hope behind!
Out of sight is out of mind
In these caverns of the dead.
In the city overhead
Former lover, former foe
To their works and pleasures go
Nor consider who beneath
Weep and howl and gnash their teeth.
Down in Hell as up in Heaven
No hands are in marriage given,
Nor is honour or degree
Known in our society.
Banker, beggar, whore and wit
In a common darkness sit.
Seasons, fashions never change;
All is stale yet all is strange;
All are foes, and none are friends
In a night that never ends.

(The sound of a key being turned in a rusty lock is heard.)

Hark! Minos comes who cruel is and strong:
Beware! Away! His whip is keen and long.

(They scatter to their cells. Enter Keeper and Anne.)

[Recitative]

Keeper

(pointing to Tom, who has not raised his head)

There he is. Have no fear. He is not dangerous.

Anne

Tom!

(Tom still does not stir.)

Keeper

He believes that he is Adonis and will answer to no other name. Humour him in that, and you will find him easy to manage. So, as you desire, I'll leave you.

Anne

(giving him money)

You are kind.

Keeper

I thank you, lady.

(Exit Keeper. – Anne goes up and stands close to Tom who still has not moved.)

Anne

Adonis.

Tom

(raising his head and springing to his feet)

Venus, my queen, my bride. At last.

[Arioso]

I have waited for thee so long, till I almost believed those madmen who blasphemed against thy honour. They are rebuked. Mount, Venus, mount thy throne.

(He leads her to the pallet on which she sits. – He kneels at her feet.)

O merciful goddess, hear the confession of my sins.

[Duett]

In a foolish dream, in a gloomy labyrinth
I hunted shadows, disdaining thy true love;

Forgive thy servant, who repents his madness,

Forgive Adonis, and he shall faithful prove.

Anne

(rising and raising him by the hand)

What should I forgive? Thy ravishing

[penitence]

Blesses me, dear heart, and brightens all the

[past.]

Kiss me, Adonis: the wild boar is vanquished.

Tom

Embrace me, Venus: I've come home at last.

Anne and Tom

Rejoice, beloved; in these fields of Elysium
Space cannot alter, nor time our love abate;

Here has no words for absence or

[estrangement]

Nor

Now a notion of Almost or Too Late.

(Tom suddenly staggers, Anne helps him gently to lie down on the pallet.)

[Recitative (quasi arioso)]

Tom

I am exceeding weary. Immortal queen, permit thy mortal bridegroom to lay his head upon thy breast.

(He does so.)

The Heavens are merciful, and all is well.
Sing, my beloved, sing me to sleep.

[Lullaby]

Anne

Gently, little boat,

Across the ocean float,

The crystal waves dividing:

The sun in the west

Is going to rest;

Glide, glide, glide

Toward the Islands of the Blest.

Chorus

(off in their cells)

What voice is this? What heavenly strains

Bring solace to tormented brains?

Anne

Orchards greenly grace
That undisturbed place,
The weary soul recalling
To slumber and dream,
While many a stream
Falls, falls, falls,
Discanting on a childlike theme.

Chorus

O sacred music of the spheres!
Where our rages and our fears?

Anne

Lion, lamb and deer,
Untouched by greed or fear
About the woods are straying:
And quietly now
The blossoming bough
Sways, sways, sways
Above the fair unclouded brow.

Chorus

Sing on! Forever sing! Release

Our frantic souls and bring us peace!

(Enter Keeper with Trulove.)

[Recitative]

Trulove

Anne, my dear, the tale is ended now.
Come home.

Anne

Yes, father.
(to Tom)
Tom, my vow
Holds ever, but it is no longer I
You need. Sleep well, my dearest dear.
Good-bye.

(Anne comes down-stage and joins Trulove.)

[Duetto]

Anne

Every wearied body must
Late or soon return to dust,
Set the frantic spirit free.
In this earthly city we
Shall not meet again, love, yet
Never think that I forget.

Trulove

God is merciful and just,
God ordains what ought to be,
But a father's eyes are wet.

(Exeunt Anne, Trulove and Keeper. – Tom wakes, starts to his feet and looks wildly around.)

[Finale]

Tom

Where art thou, Venus? Venus, where art thou? The flowers open to the sun. The birds renew their song. It is spring. The bridal couch is prepared. Come quickly, beloved, and we will celebrate the holy rites of love.

(A moment's silence, then shouting:)

Holla! Achilles, Helen, Eurydice, Orpheus, Persephone, Pluto, all my courtiers. Holla!

(The Chorus enter from all sides.)

Where is my Venus? Why have you stolen her while I slept? Madmen! Where have you hidden her?

Chorus

Venus? Stolen? Hidden? Where?
Madman! No one has been here.

Tom

My heart breaks. I feel the chill of death's approaching wing. Orpheus, strike from thy lyre a swan-like music, and weep, ye nymphs and shepherds of these Stygian fields, weep for Adonis, the beautiful, the young; weep for Adonis whom Venus loved.

(He falls back on the pallet.)

[Mourning-Chorus]

Chorus

Mourn for Adonis, ever young.

Mourn for Adonis, Venus' dear,
Weep, weep, weep, tread softly round this [bier.
Weep, weep for the dear of Venus, weep, [weep.

[Epilogue]

Before the curtain. House lights up.

(Enter Baba, Tom, Nick, Anne, Trulove, the men without wigs, Baba without her beard.)

All

Good people, just a moment:
Though our story now is ended,

There's the moral to draw
From what you saw
Since the curtain first ascended.

Anne

Not every rake is rescued
At the last by Love and Beauty;
Not every man is given an Anne
To take the place of Duty.

Baba

Let Baba warn the ladies:
You will find out soon or later
That, good or bad,
All men are mad;
All they say or do is theatre.

Tom

Beware, young men who fancy
You are Vergil or Julius Caesar,
Lest when you wake,
You be only a rake.

Trulove

I heartily agree, sir!

Nick

Day in, day out, poor Shadow
Must do as he is bidden.
Many insist I do not exist.
At times I wish I didn't.

All

So let us sing as one.
At all times in all lands
Beneath the moon and sun,
This proverb has proved true,
Since Eve went out with Adam:
For idle hands
And hearts and minds
The Devil finds
A work to do,
A work, dear Sir, fair Madam,
For you and you.

(Bow and exeunt.)